

Frank
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Document Shows

Pueblo Told To Snoop

WASHINGTON (AP) — The USS Pueblo was told to snoop on Soviet ships passing near Japan as a follow-up to her electronic surveillance of North Korea, a U.S. document shows.

The intelligence ship was supposed to visually inspect and photograph Soviet naval vessels, openly, while returning to the U.S. base at Sasebo, Japan.

The additional mission was forestalled when the North Koreans captured the Pueblo—in North Korean territorial waters, they claim—on Jan. 23, four days before she would have headed for Sasebo.

The secondary snooping job was disclosed for the first time Thursday as the U.S. government broke out of secrecy a Jan. 5, 1968 order to refute a new North Korean allegation.

The North Korean radio said the Pueblo was authorized to go as near as three miles from the

North Korean coast, under a Feb. 28, 1966 order. The United States recognizes a three-mile limit. North Korea claims 12.

The State Department acknowledged such an order went out to "a great many" Navy vessels operating near foreign shores but this was superseded in the case of the Pueblo by a specific instruction Jan. 5, 1968.

That message, couched in cryptic, often garbled military lingo, set out general details for the Pueblo's North Korea spy assignment, code-named "Ichthyonic One."

A key passage, so far as the U.S. government's effort to refute the North Korean claim is concerned, said:

"CPA (closest point of approach) to Korcom (Communist Korea)-Soviet Land Mass-Off-shore islands will be thirteen NM (nautical miles).

Said State Department press officer Robert J. McCloskey:

"We continue to have no reason to believe that the captain of the Pueblo did not adhere to the 13-mile restriction in his sailing order."

The instruction told Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, skipper of the Pueblo, to leave Sasebo about Jan. 8, proceed through the Tsushima Straits and up the Korean coast to operational areas designated Mars, Venus and Pluto.

These were Sea of Japan zones delineated on a north-south basis by the 39th to the 42nd parallels.

The Pueblo, according to the publicly released copy of the order, was to operate from 13 miles offshore to 60 miles out between the 39th and 42nd parallels.

Under these guidelines she would have been permitted to go to within about 20 miles of Soviet territory adjacent to northern North Korea.

On the way she was to "attempt to avoid detection by Soviet naval units."

Upon reaching the 39th parallel the Pueblo could move about the Mars, Pluto and Venus operational areas "concentrating efforts in areas which appear most lucrative."

This was not otherwise defined but officials have acknowledged the ship was electronically eavesdropping on North Korean shore transmissions, among other things.

On Jan. 27 the Pueblo was to leave the operational areas "and if not under surveillance, maintain strict emcom (emissions control, or radio silence)" while proceeding south along the Korean coast to the Tsushima Straits.

There, the ship was to "intercept and conduct surveillance" of Soviet naval units passing through the area.

Asked what this meant, a Pentagon spokesman said: "Just take a look at them. Follow them around. See what they're doing."

Apparently the Soviet surveil-

lance would not have been covert.

The Pueblo was told that "upon establishing firm contact with Soviet naval units, break emcom (radio silence) and transmit daily sitrep (situation report)."

"Operate at least five hundred yards from Soviet units except to close briefly to two hundred yards as necessary for visual-photo coverage," the message stated.

"Do not interfere with Soviet exercises but maintain a position on the periphery for observation purposes."

The Pueblo was to wait around for passing Soviet vessels no more than 24 hours before heading southward to arrive at Sasebo by Feb. 4.

The final somewhat garbled paragraph said: "Injsoled (installed) defensive armanent (armament) should be stowed or covered as such a mannernas (manner as) to not elicit unusual interest from surveying-surveyed unit(s). Employ only in cases where threat to survival is obvious."

The Pentagon says the Pueblo's outboard guns remained covered when she was surrounded by North Korean patrol craft which hauled her into Wonsan Jan. 23.

Officials believe it would have been futile for the small ship to have tried to fight off the enemy ships around and the fighter aircraft above her.

Control